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IRAN AND IRAQ:

A PREDICTION FOR FUTURE CONFLICT

A Research Paper

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by

Major Francis V. Xavier

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Disclaimer

Contents

Preface

In this paper I have examined several causes of the Iran-Iraq war, but more specifically, I have focused on the individual causes which may have contributed to the hostilities. Hopefully, this paper is useful in that it sheds some light on some of the causes of the war, and that it can provoke critical thought on whether we can expect another round of major hostilities between these two countries.

My idea for this paper is the result of participating in Lt Col Jim Forsyth's Causes of War Research Elective Course. The course provided the background for the ideas which I expanded and developed in the following chapters. I would like to thank Lt Col Forsyth for his guidance, and for conducting an entertaining and excellent course. Without his assistance, I might still be looking for a topic.

Abstract

The Iran-Iraq War ended in 1989 after nearly eight years of bloodshed. When it was over, the conditions which existed at the beginning of the war remained virtually unchanged. Consequently, considerable potential exists for another war. This paper presents the argument that the war was essentially a struggle between two men, Ayatollah Khomeini, and Saddam Hussein. Saddam feared Khomeini because Khomeini threatened Saddam's power base in Iraq. Consequently, he started the war after a cost-benefit calculation convinced him that an attack on Iran could solve his external problem (Khomeini) and shore up internal support for his government.

Saddam Hussein used the rallying cries of culture and religion to convince the Iraqi people to fight, but in reality, culture and religion were simply tools which he utilized to carry out his personal struggle against Khomeini. Khomeini and his advisors set the stage for war, and, in many ways, provoked Saddam's attack—they should not have been surprised by it.

Although Iraq won the war militarily, and possessed a significant military advantage over Iran in 1989, the 1991 Persian Gulf War reduced Iraq's capabilities to a point where a rough parity now exists between Iran and Iraq—conditions similar to those found in 1980. Ayatollah Khomeini has been replaced by Ayatollah Khameini, who appears to be somewhat more pragmatic in his approach to exporting Islamic revolution than was his predecessor. The relationship, however, between Saddam Hussein and the government of

Iran has not changed appreciably since 1980 and there are several unresolved issues which could ignite renewed hostilities.

Chapter 1

Introduction

The Iran-Iraq war lasted nearly eight years, from September of 1980 until August of 1989, and resulted in more than one and a half million war and war-related casualties. At the end, virtually none of the issues which are usually blamed for the war had been resolved. The UN-arranged cease-fire merely put an end to the fighting, leaving two isolated states to pursue an arms race with each other, and with the other countries in the region.

What were the original causes that brought Iran and Iraq to war? Were they a combination of societal, cultural, and economic causes, or did war result from the actions and desires of individual leaders? If the causes of war were not settled after the UN cease-fire, will the two countries fight again, and, if so, what events might signal renewed hostilities? The purpose of this paper is to try and answer these questions.

To begin our discussion, Chapter Two explores some of the generally accepted causes of the 1980-1989 Iran-Iraq war, including differences in both the religious and cultural makeup of the two countries. We then move on to examine the leaders who held power at the start of the war, Ayatollah Ruholla Khomeini in Iran, and President Saddam Hussein of Iraq. This chapter sets up the argument that the war was primarily a struggle resulting from the relationship between these two men, who brought their nations along

for the ride. Finally, we compare the military strengths of each country at the beginning of the war, in an attempt to draw some conclusions about each leader's perceptions of the other's strengths, and how that may have helped set the stage for war in 1980.

Chapter Three examines the endstate of the Iran-Iraq war by comparing how the terms of the UN cease-fire did, or did not, fulfill the original objectives of Khomeini and Saddam Hussein. In order to do that, we again compare some of the causes of the war with the situation which currently exists between the two countries. The chapter concludes by comparing the military strengths of Iran and Iraq at the end of the war.

Chapter Four looks at the current political leaders, their policies, and military strengths and weaknesses. How is each country different than in 1980 and how are they the same? This chapter sets the stage for the discussion of capabilities and intentions which follows.

In Chapter Five we take a look at the relationship between capabilities and intentions. An understanding of this relationship is critical since an examination of a nation's capabilities is a necessary part of determining whether or not its leaders will decide to make war. The quest for military capabilities often provides a hint of what a nation's intent may be, for example, if a nation continues to strive for a significant military advantage over its neighbors, its intentions may be hostile. Capabilities alone, however, do not tell the whole story. Only when we combine capabilities with an assessment of the leader's will to use them can we begin to ascertain their intentions.

The final chapter re-introduces the notion of the individual struggle between Saddam Hussein and the leader of Iran, be it Ayatollah Khomeini, or his successor. By looking at Saddam as the "individual," and the leaders of Iran as the "conditions" which dictate the

individual's behavior, a prediction for future conflict is possible. The paper concludes with a suggested list of the pre-conditions which might signal the beginning of another war. Hopefully, the items on the list might be useful as indicators for foreign policy decision-makers and military planners.

Chapter 2

Causes-1980

Iran and Iraq did not start fighting in 1980 simply because most Iranians are Persians while most Iraqis are Arabs. They did not fight because of differences between the Shi'a and Sunni sects of Islam, even though the Iranians are ruled by Shi'as and the Iraqis by Sunnis. They also did not go to war over land, water, or oil, although all of these issues have been cited as causes for the war. In all likelihood, these two countries went to war because of a conflict between two men. One of these men, Iraqi President Saddam Hussein, feared the power of the other man, Iranian leader Ayatollah Ruholla Khomeini. Saddam's fear was the primary cause of this war.

So, when we start our look into the causes of the war, we should focus on what drove Saddam Hussein to fear Iran, since Iran's initial motivation for fighting was basically a defensive, survival-based rationale. This is not to say that Iran was an innocent bystander, wrongly attacked by a belligerent neighbor. On the contrary, Iran did as much, or more, to set the stage for hostilities. It was merely Iraq who fired the first shots, out of fear.

What caused this fear? Although Iran has a larger population and more territory; conditions which would lead Iraq to consider Iran a geopolitical threat, these conditions existed before Khomeini came to power in Iran. Why did Saddam Hussein not attack Iran

in 1978 or 1979, when the Shah was still in power? Perhaps Iraq feared American intervention prior to 1980, since the Shah was a client of the US. More likely, however, is that Saddam's fear of Iran increased significantly along with the changes which took place in 1979 and 1980 after Khomeini's return to Iran.   After Khomeini's return there was increased emphasis by the Iranians on exporting an Islamic revolution that prescribed, as one of its objectives, the overthrow of Saddam Hussein's secularly-based Ba'ath party government in Iraq. So, by 1979, Saddam was living next door to a neighbor who was not only larger and potentially stronger, but whose leaders were publicly calling for the overthrow of his government.[1]

Nevertheless, even Saddam Hussein, who held nearly absolute authority over his people, had to find a supportable cause in order to motivate the Iraqi population to wage war. Saddam's personal fear of losing political power at the hands of Khomeini was not sufficient rationale for mobilizing public support. Consequently, he realized he must bring to bear some of the deeply rooted causes of traditional mistrust and hatred between his people and the people of Iran in order to incite the Iraqis to violence. Saddam chose two major differences between Iranians and Iraqi and then exploited them. The first one being the differences between the Sunni and Shi'a sect of Islam, and the second one being the differences between Iraqi Arabs and Iranian Persians.

Let's discuss the religious differences first. Although Muslims of both sects live in both countries, Iran is governed by leaders belonging to the Shi'a sect of Islam, while Iraq is governed by individuals associated with the Sunni sect. This difference in religious affiliation has its roots in the death of the Prophet Muhammad in AD 632 and the struggle to determine who would succeed him as both head of the Islamic State, and leader of the

Islamic faith. This "problem of succession" resulted in a factional split as the supporters of Muhammad's cousin and adopted son Ali, who felt that he was the rightful successor, became known as Shi'at Ali, or partisans of Ali. This title was later shortened to simply Shi'a. The other faction was made up of people who believed that any member of Muhammad's tribe, the Quraysh, could rightfully succeed Muhammad as Caliph, or spiritual leader. They believed that they were following the Prophet's true desires and hence came to be known as Sunni, which comes from Sunna, or "way of the prophet." The basic question was one of whether successors to Muhammad ruled by divine right (i.e. since Muhammad was proclaimed as Prophet by divine right, only his direct ancestors had the right to succeed him) or whether any qualified member of the Quraysh tribe could be appointed by committee.

This competition for the leadership of Islam was not always a peaceful discourse on the legitimacy of one group over the other. For example, the third caliph, Uthman ibn-Affan, was murdered by one of Ali's supporters in AD 656, setting the stage for Ali to assume the caliphate.[2]

The issue of succession and the hatred it inspired continues to have relevance today as a deeply emotional issue for many Muslims and Saddam efficiently manipulated the state-run Iraqi media in order to put forth his message of contempt for Iranian Shi'as. For example, when Saddam Hussein's forces invaded Iran in 1980, he proclaimed the campaign to be the "second Qadesiya," a reference to the first battle of Qadesiya in AD 635 when the armies of Caliph Umar, an early Sunni leader, defeated the Iranians during the early spread of Islam.

Now we can move on to the second tool which Saddam used to rally public support; the traditional differences between the Arabs of Iraq and the predominantly Persian population of Iran. These differences are as deeply rooted as the religious separation and were often exacerbated by the Iranians themselves, who were the "only major group conquered by the Arabs who consistently kept their identity as a people." They, "thought of themselves as different from the rest of the Muslims and thereby consistently aroused the hostility of others."[3] When the Iranians officially adopted the Shi'a religion, this only served to make the differences between them and the rest of the Arab/Muslim world more pronounced. When expertly manipulated by Saddam, the issues of religion and culture were sufficient to inflame Iraqi passions for war.

As we've noted, the 1980 Iraqi attack was not an unprovoked incursion on Iran. Let us now examine, in more depth, the effect that Khomeini's exportation of Islamic revolution had on Saddam Hussein's decision to attack. Initially, Saddam had supported Khomeini's movement in Iran, even though his ulterior motive may have been based on the expectation that the revolution would ultimately weaken Iran, and make it less of a threat. In fact, Saddam hoped to use the unrest in Iran to his advantage by taking the opportunity to readdress the terms of the 1975 Algiers Accord, which he felt was unfavorable. Saddam may have also accepted the fact that there was little, or nothing, he could do to affect internal changes in Iran anyway, so he might as well offer support to the revolution. Consequently, in July, 1979, Saddam proclaimed a close relationship with Iran "based on mutual respect and non-interference in internal affairs."[4]

Saddam was forced to alter his approach, however, when Khomeini's revolutionary rhetoric began calling for "the Iraqi population to rise up and overthrow the Saddamite

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regime."[5] By this time, Iran had resumed its support of Kurdish separatist groups and the underground Iraqi Shi'as who were engaged in a campaign of terrorist attacks against Saddam's government.[6]

This external threat to Saddam's power could hardly have come at a worse time. Throughout the 1970's, the Ba'ath party, which consists primarily of Sunni Muslims, had been fighting a prolonged struggle to maintain its power base in Iraq, a country consisting predominantly of Shi'as. During the same period, from 1972 to 1978, Ruholla Khomeini lived in Iraq, and pursued his attacks on the Iranian Shah's regime from inside the Iraqi Shi'a community. Khomeini's eventual expulsion from Iraq, probably on Saddam's orders, created significant dissension among Iraq's Shi'a population and further complicated the Ba'ath party's internal problem of maintaining popular support. In 1979 Iraq's leading Shi'a cleric, Muhammad Bakr al Sadr, officially requested asylum in Iran citing "politically unacceptable" conditions under Saddam's Ba'athist government. Khomeini refused the grant of asylum but told the cleric to remain in Iraq because the "source of his distress would soon be removed."[7] Saddam reacted to this thinly-veiled threat by putting al Sadr under house arrest. Meanwhile, an assassination attempt was made on Iraqi information minister Tariq Aziz. Saddam's police apprehended several hundred suspected Shi'a militants and extracted a confession from one of them, who said Khomeini had ordered the assassination attempt. In response, Saddam ordered al Sadr's execution and expelled several thousand Shi'as to Iran. At this point Khomeini began to publicly call for the overthrow of Saddam's government.

So we see that Saddam had two interrelated problems to deal with; an external threat to his power, i.e. Iran, and an internal threat, the Iraqi Shi'as who were being supported by

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Iran. Both of these threats increased his fear of Khomeini. Striking out at Iran was a way to deal with both threats at the same time.

At least one more factor, however, should be considered in Saddam's decision making process. Even with all his perceived reasons for attacking Iran, Saddam would not have done so had he not thought he could win, and win quickly. Saddam was not alone in his assumption of a short, decisive war. As Geoffrey Blainey points out, "nations confident of victory in a forthcoming war were usually confident that victory would come quickly."[8]

Why was Saddam confident that he would win? There are several reasons, the first being that he believed, based on the intelligence reports of former Iranian military officers who had fled to Iraq after the Shah was deposed, that Iran was suffering from the fragmentation of political factions which had banded together to overthrow the Shah, but which were now falling-out. Militarily, Iran was also much weaker than it had been only a few years before. In September of 1980, its total military forces numbered under 150,000 troops, less than half of what it had been under the Shah. Additionally, hundreds of its regular career officers had been purged following the revolution because they were thought to be disloyal to Khomeini.[9] In fact, the army had lost more than half of its field grade officers, and the air force lost 15-20 percent of its pilots. Additionally, about half of the enlisted men in all services had either deserted or were killed during the revolution. While Iran reportedly possessed 1735 tanks, 1700 armored fighting vehicles, and 1000 artillery pieces, less than half of them could probably be deployed due to lack of manpower and training. The air force could operate less than half of its aircraft and Iran's

ground force consisted of only six under-strength divisions. Only Iran's navy retained most of its pre-revolution capability.[10]

In contrast, the Iraqi army stood at a strength of about 200,000 troops, consisting of 12 divisions, and could deploy and operate almost all of its weapons systems; some 2750 tanks, 2500 armored fighting vehicles, and 920 artillery pieces. Iraq's air force was in much better condition than Iran's, with modern Soviet and French-design fighters. Only in its naval forces was Iraq outmatched by Iran. Additionally, Iraq had a robust command and control system through which Saddam Hussein was able to maintain reasonably accurate situational awareness and control of his forces, while Iran possessed virtually no centralized command and control ability.[11] "From Iraq's perspective the time to strike was unlikely to be better than in 1980, before the revolution put down its roots, while its (Iran's) forces were in disarray, and while its (Iran's) relationship with both superpowers were at best strained."[12]

In this chapter we've examined some of the causes of the Iran-Iraq war. But most importantly, we have narrowed our discussion to the relationship between Saddam Hussein and Ruhollah Khomeini, and proposed the thesis that Saddam's fear of Khomeini was the primary cause of the war. In the next chapter we will jump forward eight years and look at some of the conditions which existed at the end of the war.

Notes

[1]Karsh, E. and Rautsi, I. *Saddam Hussein, A Political Biography*, (The Free Press, New York, NY, 1992), 138.
[2]Armajani, Y. and Ricks, T. *Middle East: Past and Present.* (Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, NJ, 1986), 52.
[3]Ibid., 213-214
[4]Karsh, E. *Saddam Hussein*, 138.
[5]Karsh, E. *Saddam Hussein*, 138.

Notes

[6]Karsh, E. *Saddam Hussein*, 139.

[7]Pelletiere, S. *The Iran-Iraq War: Chaos in a Vacuum,* (Praeger Publishers, New York, NY, 1992), 31.

[8]Blainey, G. *The Causes of War,* (The Free Press, New York, NY, 1988), 41.

[9]Pelletiere, S. *Chaos*, 35.

[10]Karsh, E. et al. *The Iran-Iraq War: Impact and Implications.* (St. Martin's Press, New York, NY, 1989), 258.

[11]Ibid., 258.

[12]Ibid., 14.

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Chapter 3

The End State-1989

The war ended with a cease-fire which was put into effect on August 20, 1988 under the terms of United Nations Security Council Resolution 598. The articles of the resolution established the cease-fire, called for the withdrawal of forces to positions behind internationally recognized borders, established the provisions for a peace keeping force, mandated the release and repatriation of all POWs, and included several other measures to ensure an end to the underlying conflict. Specifically, Article Four calls for a "comprehensive, just, and honorable settlement of all outstanding issues."[1] In truth, although negotiations have continued for years, few of these "outstanding issues" have been settled. For instance, an agreement on the international boundary which divides the Shatt al Arab waterway has still not been reached. Additionally, and both countries continue to hold POWs even though the war ended more than seven years ago.

The previous chapter examined several causes of the war and we have said that Saddam had several reasons for his attack on Iran. Saddam feared Khomeini, but he based his timing for the attack not only on fear, but also on his assessment of the balance of power. As Geoffrey Blainey states, "It is not the actual distribution or balance of power which is vital: it is rather the way in which national leaders think that power is distributed."[2] Although Saddam Hussein feared Khomeini's power and ambitions of

exporting Islamic revolution, Saddam perceived his military force to be superior to Iran's. In other words, he conducted a cost vs. benefit analysis and determined that the distribution of power was in his favor, and that the time to strike was now. This may lead us to begin to see that Saddam Hussein is more of a rational figure than is popularly thought. We'll come back to that idea later. First, let's examine more closely some of the factors which may have entered into Saddam's analysis.

In his article on the war, Edmund Ghareeb stated several reasons why Iraq went to war, some of which I have already mentioned.[3] If the war actually accomplished anything, we would expect that some of the initial causes should have been resolved. In an effort to understand how the strategic landscape changed (or did not change) in the eight years of war, six of Ghareeb's reasons are listed below, along with my examination of the current situation:

Six Reasons Why Iraq Attacked Iran

1. *Iraq attacked Iran because the Iranian Revolution threatened Iraq's stability.* This condition still exists, although at a reduced level of intensity. Although Ruhollah Khomeini is dead, his successor Ayatollah Khameini and the Iranian Revolutionary Council continue to attempt to export Islamic revolution throughout the region. Iran continues to support Islamic movements in the Middle East, Africa, and elsewhere. The National Council of Resistance of Iran, which maintains a watch on various aspects of Iran's internal and external government policies, reported that Iran has been providing support to the South African terrorist group PAGAD, in its attempt to build up an intelligence network in South Africa. The same terrorist training camp at which the

PAGAD personnel received training has reportedly been the site used for training terrorists from Algeria, Lebanon, Egypt, and Jordan.

2. *Iraq attacked Iran because of Iran's support of Iraqi dissidents and Kurdish separatists.* Again, this condition continues to have an effect on relations between the two countries, only the intensity and frequency has been reduced. Iran continues to support Kurdish separatists within Iraq. The recent Kurdish offensive into the town of Sulaymaniyah was reportedly supported by Iranian Revolutionary Guards, who provided artillery support.

3. *Iraq attacked Iran because Iraq believed it could not reach accommodation with Iran.* Whether or not Saddam Hussein believes he can reach some stage of accommodation with Iran over various issues is difficult to assess. (Even more difficult to determine is whether Saddam even wants to reach an agreement, as he may consider it more advantageous to keep a certain level of tension existing between the two countries.) As of 1993, no agreements on the settlement of ownership of the Shatt al Arab waterway had been reached. Iran still holds as many as 20,000 Iraqi POWs while Iraq holds somewhere around 5,000 Iranians. Iran has stated that it will retain all Iraqi aircraft that flew to Iran to escape destruction during the Gulf War.

4. *Iraq attacked Iran because Iraq believed Iran was vulnerable.* This is the area in which the major change has taken place since the end of the war. In all likelihood, Iran's military capability is now great enough to dissuade Saddam Hussein from pursuing anything more ambitious than limited border operations to neutralize Iran-supported Kurdish insurrection. While Iraq's ability to maintain its military has been severely limited since the Gulf War, Iran has been able to pursue a reasonably effective program of arms

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importation and development, including the procurement of the region's only submarine, the indigenous development of attack helicopters and hovercraft, and continuing importation and development of weapons of mass destruction.[4]

5. *Iraq attacked Iran because Saddam Hussein was unhappy with the terms of the 1975 Algiers Accord.* All indications are that Saddam Hussein is just as unhappy with the 1975 Algiers Accord now as he was in 1980. In fact, the Iraqi government "contends that the 1975 Treaty is null and void."[5] In Saddam Hussein's mind, the Algiers Accord was violated by Iran in 1980 when Iran called for the overthrow of the Iraqi government. Consequently, Iraq's position is that since the 1975 agreement no longer holds, ownership of the waterway defaults to Iraq under the terms of an earlier agreement signed by both parties in 1937, which grants Iraq full sovereignty over the channel. Iran contends that the Algiers Accord remains in effect. Under the terms of UNR 598, discussion on this issue can go on indefinitely, thereby extending a major source of conflict into the indefinite future.

6. Iraq attacked Iran because Saddam Hussein wanted to fill the void in Arab leadership that was created when Egypt signed the Camp David Accords. There is no reason to believe that Saddam has moderated his desire to gain regional hegemony. Although still beset by internal security problems, and the fact that Iraq's sovereignty is violated every day by US and allied aircraft patrolling the northern and southern no-fly zones which were established to protect Iraqi Kurds in the north and Shi'as in the south, Saddam Hussein very likely still entertains visions of himself as the leader of a non-aligned, Arab world. "As long as Saddam Hussein and the present Ba'ath elite is in power, Iraq is almost certain to be revanchist and aggressive in character...it is almost

certain to lead to constant Iraqi tests of Western resolve and growing Iraqi efforts to intimidate the southern Gulf states."[6]

Two Reasons Why Iran Provoked Iraqi Aggression

We have said that Saddam was predominantly motivated by fear and that his fear was primarily the result of Khomeini's actions. The Iraqi attack, although preemptive in nature, was not unprovoked. Although Iran was initially on the defensive, Khomeini probably expected the attack, and very likely welcomed the onset of war. Ghareeb cited reasons why Iran may have wanted war in 1980[7]. Below are two of these original reasons, along with my assessment of whether the same conditions obtain at the present time.

1. *Iran provoked Iraq because Khomeini believed the Iraqi Shi'as would rise up and overthrow Saddam Hussein.* Iran continues to export its revolutionary activity, and Iraq is still a primary target. The Shi'a population of Iraq probably constitutes 60 to 65 percent of the total Iraqi population.[8] According to CIA estimates, most Iraqi Shi'as have a strong commitment to Iraq, but do not necessarily exhibit the same level of allegiance to the Ba'ath government of Saddam Hussein. Several powerful Shi'a families, such as the Hakim, actively oppose Saddam Hussein's government and reportedly receive funding, training, and equipment from within Iran.[9] Although the Shi'a community was suppressed in a very brutal fashion following the Gulf War, the potential for further violence exists as many Shi'as who were formally loyal to the Ba'ath party have now been alienated.[10]

2. *Iran provoked Iraq because Khomeini wanted to divert the Iranian people's attention from their internal problems.* "To be sure, for quite some time the war fulfilled

an important, in fact vital, internal function by enabling the clerics to consolidate their power base, suppress domestic opposition and rally public support behind the regime."[11] According to recent reports from the National Council of Resistance of Iran, the revolutionary government continues to fight to maintain control of the population and is being assaulted in its efforts by various dissident groups. Reportedly, more than 1000 dissident demonstrators were arrested after riots occurred in Kermanshah province. Additionally, some of these demonstrators may have been subjected to torture and other forms of treatment not in compliance with international human rights norms.[12] "Iranian intelligence agents and hard-liners have shot Iranian dissidents in France, Italy, Turkey, and Switzerland, and possibly in eight other countries."[13] Iran's Ministry of Intelligence and Security (VEVAK) has carried out assassinations of dissidents operating within, and outside of, Iran. Primary targets have been leaders of the People's Mujahideen, National Council of Resistance of Iran, and Kurdish Democratic Party of Iran leaders.[14] In a recent example of less violent methods of exerting control, the Iranian government reportedly ordered the confiscation of more than 1500 satellite antennas from around the country, in an effort to limit the amount of western-influenced information coming into the country.[15]

Our discussion of the end state of the war must include a quantitative look at each country's military forces. Saddam viewed the balance of power to be in his favor in 1980. Let's discuss how the balance sheet appeared after eight years of war? In 1989, Iraq clearly held an overwhelming superiority in virtually all military forces. (The one exception was in naval forces, where Iran still held some advantage.) Saddam Hussein's army numbered more than 1,000,000 compared to an Iranian army of slightly more than 650,000. Iraq's advantage in armored forces was more than four-to-one, and its

advantage in military aircraft was about ten-to-one.[16] Clearly, Iraq was the military victor in the war, having recaptured all its territorial losses and having then presented Iran with a medium range missile attack on Teheran for which Iran could not retaliate. By 1988, the population of Iran was fleeing its cities, and the national morale was virtually destroyed. Orders for conscription were being ignored and desertion from the revolutionary forces was running at a significantly high rate. "In the spring of 1988, the Iranian army was decisively defeated in a series of battles that drove Iran out of Iraq and cost Iran's army more than 40% of its major equipment."[17] In the wake of these significant Iraqi military victories, Khomeini was convinced by his advisors that he must accept the UN-brokered cease-fire.

Iraq also suffered significantly. Saddam Hussein took great pains to try and "insulate the Iraqi population from the dislocations of the war."[18] But with an average casualty rate of over 1200 soldiers per month, there was no way to mask the serious consequences of this war, especially in a small country of only 14 million people.[19] Additionally, Iraq incurred enormous debt, on the order of 70 billion dollars, and emerged from the war with a strong army, but owing billions of dollars to Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, both of which had financed Iraq's military expenditures.[20]

In this chapter we looked at the end state of the war, both as a way of determining if anything was actually accomplished during the eight years of fighting and to gain some insight into Saddam's analysis of what he had to gain by starting a war. Of the six reasons we explored for Iraq's attack, all but one (reason four) still have relevance today. Only the issue of Iran's vulnerability is in question. Both of the reasons which caused Iran to provoke a conflict with Iraq are still applicable to the current environment. Iran continues

to use the Iraqi Shi'as as a tool to spread Islamic revolution, and the government's internal security measures would almost certainly include targeting the Iraqi threat if current attempts to maintain stability fail.

In the next chapter we turn our attention to current events to address the question of whether Iran is still a source of fear for Saddam Hussein, and how each country is preparing for the potential of future conflict.

Notes

[1]Joyner, C.,et al. *The Persian Gulf War: Lessons for Strategy, Law, and Diplomacy.* (Greenwood Press, Westport, CT, 1990), 211.

[2]Blainey, G. *The Causes of War,* 114.

[3]Ibid., 35.

[4]National Council of Resistance in Iran (NCRI), *Brief on Iran.* (On-line. Internet, December, 1996.)

[5]Joyner, C., et al. *Persian Gulf War,* 218.

[6]Cordesman, A. *Iran and Iraq: The Threat from the Northern Gulf.* (Westview Press, Boulder, CO, 1994.), 118.

[7]Joyner, C., et al. *Persian Gulf War,* 36.

[8]Ibid., 141.

[9]Ibid., 141.

[10]Ibid., 149.

[11]Karsh, E. et al. *The Iran-Iraq War,* 34.

[12]NCRI, *Brief on Iran.*

[13]Cordesman, A. *Iran and Iraq,* 30.

[14]Ibid., 30.

[15]NCRI, *Brief on Iran.*

[16]Joyner, C., et al., *Persian Gulf War,* 177.

[17]Cordesman, A., *Iran and Iraq,* 16.

[18]Karsh, E. *Saddam Hussein,* 134.

[19]Ibid.

[20]Cordesman, A., *Iran and Iraq,* 16.

Chapter 4

Leaders, Policies, and Military Strength-1997

Does Saddam Hussein still have sufficient reasons to fear Iran? Although Iraq possessed a significant military advantage over Iran in 1989, much has changed in the seven years since the end of the war. The most obvious change on the Iraqi side is the heavy military personnel and equipment losses which Iraq suffered during it's defeat in the 1991 Persian Gulf War. On the Iranian side, the most significant change is the death of Ayatollah Khomeini in 1989 and his replacement by Ayatollah Ali Hoseini-Khameini. In effect, these changes have brought us nearly full circle to conditions which appear very similar to those found in 1980 - a very plausible setting for a renewal of hostilities between the two states.

Iran's political leadership looks much the same as it did seventeen years ago. Indeed, two of Khomeini's early supporters now run the government. The supreme leader and functional head of state is Ayatollah Ali Hoseini-Khameini, who assumed power in June, 1989. Khameini was formerly the president of Iran, having been elected in 1981 after the assassinations of several, more secularly motivated, Iranian politicians. Khameini received the support of Ayatollah Khomeini because Khomeini believed that secular politicians could not be trusted, and that Iran should be led by Mullahs, or members of the clergy. [1] Ayatollah Khameini has, however, proven to be slightly more progressive in his approach

to Islamic rule than Khomeini, and he made an early push for more liberal policies on "rules of dress, social conduct, and the arts."[2] Prior to becoming the Iranian leader, it was Khameini who first influenced his predecessor to allow female newscasters to broadcast reports on Iranian radio.[3]

The current president of Iran is Ali Akbar Hashemi-Rafsanjani, who was re-elected in an election held in 1993. Rafsanjani's association with Khomeini and Islamic revolution pre-dates the overthrow of the Shah. Rafsanjani was one of seven Mullahs who made up Khomeini's council of advisors beginning in 1977, and was selected by Khomeini to represent the revolution to the Iranian oil workers in an attempt to limit oil production and thereby undermine the Shah's economic base within Iran.[4]

A State Department note summarizes that "by mid-1982, a succession of power struggles eliminated first the center of the political spectrum and then the leftists, leaving only the clergy. There has been some moderation of excesses both internally and internationally, although Iran remains a significant sponsor of terrorism."[5] Consequently, Iranian political leadership can be seen as only slightly less oriented toward Islamic revolution as it was under Khomeini, and with a somewhat more balanced sense of progressive or liberal ideas. Iran is still bent on exporting revolution, but with slightly less zeal than in 1980, and is taking a more pragmatic view of its ability to influence political events in the region.

Iran's military forces are struggling to recover from the war, and their growth and modernization has been slowed by Iran's high levels of unemployment, inflation, and foreign debt. 1993 CIA estimates of Iran's military budget state that the country is spending somewhere in the neighborhood of 14 percent of its Gross Domestic Product on

defense expenditures. Major suppliers of military equipment to Iran include states of the former Soviet Union, China, and various Western European countries who have been supplying such items as MiG-29 fighters and T-72 tanks. Reportedly, Iran had a 10 billion dollar plan to increase its armored force from 500 to 1400 tanks, and its combat aircraft fleet from 275 to 350. Finally, Iran continues to find ways to support its aging US-produced equipment through black market suppliers of ammunition and spare parts. [6]

In terms of overall capability, the Iranian army is probably better prepared to fight Iraq than it was in 1980. The armies' leadership has, at the very least, survived the eight year war, and has realized that mass human-wave attacks by untrained conscripts are not an effective fighting tactic. The Iranian army should be considered defensive in nature, and could probably resist an invasion by Iraq. It is not, however, robust enough to present a viable offensive threat to Iraq.[7] The army is assessed to consist of 10-12 regular divisions, consisting of four armor, seven infantry, and one special forces divisions, with a total strength of about 195,000 soldiers. They are supported by 150,000 Revolutionary Guards in 28-30 divisional "structures." [8] Iran's current inventory of 700 to 800 tanks includes a small number of Polish-built T-72s, but is generally assessed to be inferior to Western armored forces.[9]

Likewise, Iran's air force is probably more prepared to defend Iranian territory against Iraqi incursion than it was in 1980. It does not, however, have the capability to attain air superiority over the border area, much less for offensive operations inside Iraq. In terms of parity with Iraq, Iran does not currently possess equal capability, even if it were to employ the Iraq aircraft which were left in Iran after the Gulf War. It's inventory of approximately 195 combat-ready aircraft includes US F-14s, F-5s, and F-4s along with

about 65 MiG-29s and Su-24s.[10] Iran's air force suffers from the same problems as most Middle Eastern air forces, while they have reasonably good aircraft and pilots, they lack the capability to sustain significant sortie rates over more than a few days, and cannot command and control large formations of aircraft in the way that many Western air forces, the USAF in particular, are able to. Iran may be able to gain rough parity with Iraq, in numbers of aircraft and pilots, by the end of the 1990s.[11]

The Iranian navy outclasses the Iraqi navy by a wide margin, but it is important to remember that this advantage may have limited value in a future war with Iraq. Nevertheless, Iran continues to rebuild its navy, having recently acquired at least one Kilo-class conventionally powered submarine, in its attempt to become a viable naval presence in the Persian Gulf.[12]

Iraq continues to recover its military capability in the wake of the Gulf War. Although the Iraqi army is much smaller and less capable than it was in 1989, having been reduced from approximately 67 divisions to 30 divisions,[13] several Republican Guard units survived the attempts by US-led coalition forces to destroy them in January and February of 1991. The Iraqi army currently consists of six armor, four mechanized, and 18-20 infantry divisions, and has retained much of its command and control capability. Its forces have been reorganized since the Gulf War in an attempt to overcome the losses and make due with the manpower and equipment which survived. Iraq currently has about 400,000 soldiers on active duty with about 2500 tanks and 1500 artillery pieces. Consequently, Iraq could probably defeat the Iranian army in any border engagement with Iran, if it has sufficient warning of impending hostilities. Iraq's army still has not mastered the elements of maneuver warfare, but this would probably not significantly effect the outcome of any

future war with Iran, whose army is also not considered to possess the highly mobile aspects of the US and other Western armies.[14]

Iraq lost almost half its air power during the Gulf War and lost a majority of its latest generation fighters. Iraq's air force currently consists of about 400 aircraft, is somewhat stronger than Iran's, and could probably maintain air superiority in limited areas over the border. Iraq is expected to retain this slight superiority for the next five years or so.[15]

Iraq's navy, which was virtually destroyed in the 1991 war, is no match for the Iranian maritime force, and would most likely be quickly neutralized or destroyed in any conflict with Iran. In an attempt to begin rebuilding its navy, Iraq had negotiated to purchase four frigates and four missile corvettes from Italy. Although those ships have been built, Italy recently indicated that they will not deliver the ships to Iraq. Consequently, "there is little likelihood that Iraq will be able to modernize or rebuild its naval and coastal defense forces for some time to come."[16]

What has taken place since the late 1980s is an arms race between the two countries, only temporarily halted by Iraq's invasion of Kuwait and the ensuing war in 1990 and 1991. Both countries continue to pursue the both production and importation of conventional weapons and weapons of mass destruction. Iran's plans for military progress have been hampered internally by its economic problems and externally by arms control regimes which continue to restrict the availability of weapons and supporting technologies. Iraq's progress has been hampered by its high level of foreign debt, the destruction of much of its military capability during the Gulf War, and sanctions put in place after the Gulf War under UNSC Resolution 687, which have prevented the import of weapons and restricted Iraq's sale of oil. "The ban on the sail of oil (which could bring Iraq an

estimated $12-15 billion a year in income) has been crucial in denying Iraq the funds that would enable it to once again engage in the large-scale smuggling of dual-use equipment and technology needed to produce nonconventional arms."[17] Although Iraq has been unable to resume its imports, it has rebuilt a good share of its military-industrial infrastructure, and apparently has resumed building T-72 tanks, artillery, missiles, small arms, and spare parts.[18]

Meanwhile, Iran is building new helicopters and hovercraft, and has recently been attempting to upgrade its air defense system with anti aircraft equipment purchased from Switzerland [19] Both Iran and Iraq continue to surreptitiously build their arsenals of non-conventional weapons, however, intrusive UN inspections in Iraq following DESERT STORM have limited Saddam Hussein's ability to continue developing weapons of mass destruction, while Iran has been able to continue with less external oversight by the non-proliferation regime.

In this chapter we have determined that both Iran and Iraq are attempting to build their military capabilities in all areas and that a sort of rough parity exists, with Iraq possibly holding a slight advantage in ground and air forces. The next chapter will discuss the difficulties of translating these nation's military capabilities into an assessment of their political intentions.

Notes

[1]Taheri, A., *The Spirit of Allah: Khomeini and the Islamic Revolution,* (Adler and Adler, Bethesda, MD, 1986), 276.
[2]Ibid., 288.
[3]Ibid.
[4]Ibid., 236.
[5]US Department of State. *Iran: State Department Notes, July 1994.* (Washington Post. On-line. Internet, December, 1996.)

Notes

[6]Cordesman, A. *Iran and Iraq,* 36.

[7]Ibid., 52.

[8]Gazit, S., et al. *The Middle East Military Balance 1992-1993.* (Westview Press, Boulder, CO, 1993), 146.

[9] Ibid.,147.

[10]Ibid.,145.

[11]Cordesman, A., *Iran and Iraq,* 58.

[12]Gazit, S., *Balance,* 148.

[13]Ibid., 150

[14]Cordesman, A., *Iran and Iraq,* 201.

[15]Ibid., 217

[16]Eisenstadt, M., *Like a Phoenix from the Ashes? The Future of Iraqi Military Power.* (The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, Washington, DC, 1993), 59.

[17]Ibid., xv.

[18]Ibid., xix.

[19]NCRI, *Brief on Iran.*

Chapter 5

Capabilities and Intentions

Up to this point, we have examined historical events and concentrated on facts and figures in an attempt to determine why Iran and Iraq fought their eight year war, how conditions have changed or remained the same, and if they were to fight again, who would win? In order to determine the likelihood of future hostilities, however, we must address one of the classic problems of military intelligence, that of assessing an enemy's intentions.

Why is it so difficult to determine intent? Perhaps it is because a nation's ability to carry out a policy does not necessarily mean that the nation intends to do so. Nor does a nation's inability to pursue a policy necessarily prevent it from making the attempt. Perhaps, then, it is more useful to consider the process of gaining military capabilities, rather than the capabilities themselves, as a key to understanding intentions. This is certainly true in the case of both Iran and Iraq, whose policies center around building military strength and accruing regional power.

In the case of Iraq, Michael Eisenstadt describes Saddam Hussein's strategy for survival as consisting of three separate goals. First, he is striving to secure his own political survival in the wake of the Gulf War. Second, he wants to restore Iraq's sovereignty and independence, and reduce foreign interference in his affairs. Third, he is pursuing the restoration of his military capabilities.[1] Eisenstadt goes on to say that

Saddam's strategy goes beyond internal political survival. "Saddam's goals, however, are not limited to survival. He still entertains ambitions of making Iraq a regional power. This will hinge on Iraq's ability to rebuild its pre-war military might."[2]

Meanwhile, Iran is proceeding on a parallel course, with its leaders, Ayatollah Khameini and President Rafsanjani seemingly both set on continuing to incite Islamic revolution through contacts with Shi'a factions in Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE.[3] "Iran's ideology and politics remain hostile to the West, friendly Arab states, and secular Islamic regimes. While some of Iran's actions and rhetoric have moderated since the death of Khomeini, some of its actions and rhetoric have not.[4] Iran continues to strive for dominance in the Persian Gulf, especially as it pertains to the control of the islands of Abu Musa and the Greater and Lesser Tunbs. In early 1992, Iran staged its largest military exercise since 1989. The exercise included an amphibious assault in the Straits of Hormuz and practiced the tactic of blocking the straits to "an outside invader."[5] Additionally, Iran is dedicated to increasing its regional power in the northern border area, and has made significant attempts to influence Islamic revivalist elements in Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, and Tadzhikistan. The US State Department identifies Iran's foreign policy goals as emphasizing anti-US and Israel stances, the elimination of outside influence in the region, the exportation of Islamic revolution, support for external Muslim movements, and an increase in diplomatic contacts with newly developing states.[6]

So we can conclude that both Iran and Iraq are headed down parallel paths of rebuilding their military strength, both conventional and unconventional, and that the leadership of both countries aspire to some level of regional hegemony. We can also

agree that there are enough inflammatory issues; the Kurds, the Iraqi Shi'as, and the Iranian Mujihideed, to bring Iran and Iraq into periods of conflict. As the two states continue along their paths, their leaders, at one of these inflammatory periods or another, will be faced with the decision of whether or not to go to war to attempt to solve the conflict.

Geoffrey Blainey cites seven factors which influence leaders to go to war.[7] Of the seven, I have listed five below which I believe Saddam and Khameini would probably consider prior to launching a general war against the other:

1. Their military strength and ability to apply it.
2. Predictions of how outside nations will behave if war starts.
3. Their perceptions of internal unity/discord, and enemy unity/discord.
4. Nationalism and ideology.
5. The ability of their economy to sustain a war effort.

By examining the current situation in Iran and Iraq using these factors, we can make some useful assessments about the possibility of future war between the two states.

Reason 1. Military Strength. It is unlikely that either Saddam or Khameini consider their military forces capable of resuming general war against the other, and it is also unlikely that that situation will change for at least the next five to ten years. The important thing to remember is that both states are racing to achieve a military capability that will enable their leaders to consider war as a viable option.

Reason 2. Outside Interference. Both Iran and Iraq are aware that the world allowed them to wage a bloody war for almost eight years while taking only limited actions to stop them. Most US, Soviet, and UN actions centered on isolating the battlefield, preventing the spread of the conflict, and minimizing the impact of the war on Middle East oil production. There has, however, been one significant change in the strategic environment

since 1989. Now, the US is no longer constrained in its Middle East policies by the existence of the Soviet Union. There is really nothing to stop the US from entering a new Iran-Iraq war on either side, other than the fact the neither Iran or Iraq currently maintains friendly relations with the US. If the current political situation between Iran, Iraq, and the US remains unchanged, it is unlikely that either country would worry very much about world reaction to a resumption of hostilities.

Reason 3. Internal unity or discord. Internal unity is present in both countries, rigidly held in place by strong, centralized governments. Unrest and discord is also present, e.g. the Shi'a and Kurdish uprisings in Iraq, and the Mujihideen and other dissident groups in Iran. The question revolves around whether these internal problems make Iran and Iraq more likely, or less likely to go to war. Many wars have been attributed to an attempt by leaders to focus their population's attention on an external enemy as a way of strengthening internal unity. Unlike many historians, Geoffrey Blainey does not attribute interstate wars to this "scapegoat theory." In other words, according to Blainey, most leaders who are experiencing a problem with domestic unrest generally do not incite a war with another state as an attempt to divert the population's attention. On the contrary, Blainey contends that most leaders realize that a period of domestic unrest is probably the worst time to go to war, since war would create a situation where there are both external and internal forces which would tear at whatever glue is holding the country together.[8] But we must use caution with Blainey's argument here, because, as stated earlier, there is some evidence that Saddam Hussein started the 1980 war partly as a way of solidifying his power base within Iraq and that Iran viewed the war as a way to unify their population around a popular cause.

That was probably not, however, the primary cause of the first war. More likely it was an adjunct cause, related to Saddam's fear of Khomeini's power to influence the environment within Iraq from the outside. It is safe to assume that Iran is very aware of the internal problems of Iraq, and vice versa. It is also apparent that neither regime is seriously hampered from asserting control of its territory, even in the face of some domestic unrest. Consequently, it is unlikely that either Saddam or Khameini would seriously consider conditions favorable for war at the present time, based solely on the levels of friendly and enemy unity or discord. In fact, there is some evidence that "rivalry and tension between countries can exist for generations without producing war."[9] On the other hand, there are indications that Saddam Hussein may be facing significant threats to his power base in Iraq. If these indications prove accurate, the possibility does exist that Hussein could attempt to use Iran as a scapegoat, and attempt to consolidate his power.[10]

Reason 4. *Nationalism and Ideology.* Saddam Hussein uses nationalism as one of his rallying cries. It is unlikely, however, that his secularly-based government is honestly motivated on a nationalistic or ideological basis. It is much more likely that the ruling Ba'ath government is primarily concerned with preserving its power, and will use Pan-Arabism or Iraqi nationalism to achieve that end. On the other hand, Ayatollah Khameini is, by all accounts, devoutly religious, and honestly truly believes that government based on Islamic law is the correct path to follow. Consequently, it is very probable that any decision of Iran to start a war with Iraq would be based, at least partly, on Iranian nationalism or Islamic revolution.

Reason 5. *Their economy and its ability to sustain the war effort.* Both Iran and Iraq are faced with significant economic problems. Neither can afford to enter a full scale war

at the present time. In Iran, "all major business and industrial growth indicators are significantly below pre-revolutionary levels"[11]and foreign debt was estimated to be between 16 and 30 billion dollars at the end of 1994.[12] Iran's industrial sector is experiencing low productivity, lack of foreign exchange, and a lack of raw materials.[13] Iraq, although recently having received authorization to begin pumping 700 barrels of oil per day for a period of six months, is still suffering from the effects of the Iran/Iraq war and the Gulf War. "As of November, 1996, Iraq's economic outlook is grim, with little chance of the economy rising much above providing only the basic necessities and services."[14] Even though both countries have "often chosen guns over butter"[15] this may be more than a question of whether Iran and Iraq's economies can sustain a war effort. Both leaders will have to decide if going to war is worth risking the actual survival of their economies, as neither country is progressing economically even during peace time. Another war, of the intensity and duration of the 1980-1989 war, could effectively destroy one or both of these state's economies.

In this chapter we linked capabilities and intentions by examining the difference between what a country is trying to achieve and what it can actually achieve. The fact that both countries are actively striving to increase both conventional and unconventional military capability provides an indicator of both Iran and Iraq's intentions. We also discussed several key areas which the leaders of both countries would probably consider prior to engaging in another war. The final chapter will take a more in-depth look at Saddam Hussein, as the key decision maker, who will ultimately choose peace or war, based on his perception of the Iranian threat.

Notes

[1] Eisenstadt, M., *Phoenix,* 2.

[2] Ibid., 3.

[3] Cordesman, A., *Iran and Iraq,* 31.

[4] Ibid., 117

[5] Ibid., 32

[6] US Department of State, *Notes,* 5.

[7] Blainey G., *The Causes of War,* 293.

[8] Ibid., 291

[9] Ibid.

[10] Salt Lake Tribune, *CIA: Saddam May Not Last A Year.* (On-line. Internet, November, 1996)

[11] US Department of State, *Notes,* 5.

[12] Ibid.

[13] Ibid.

[14] Arab World On-line. *Country Profile: The Republic of Iraq.* (On-line. Internet, January, 1997), 5.

[15] Cordesman, A., *Iran and Iraq,* 35.

Chapter 6

Future Conflict-2000 and Beyond

Now we come to the most difficult and riskiest part of this paper; a prediction. Another war between Iran and Iraq is not inevitable, but there are sufficient reasons to suspect that the two countries will continue to remain antagonistic with regard to each other, and that these antagonisms could lead to another war. The difficulty in predicting war is due in part to the fact that, primarily, we are dealing with the personalities of a few key individuals who hold power in Iran and Iraq. Even if we correctly predict the actions of Saddam Hussein, we may miscalculate in our prediction of the environmental conditions which Iran sets, and which will dictate Saddam's behavior. One method of drawing some guarded conclusions, however, is by looking more closely at the key person in this equation, Saddam Hussein.

Two factors must be considered when we examine any leader's decision to make war. We must examine not only the personality of the leader, but also the circumstances surrounding the decision.[1] It is one thing to say that Saddam Hussein, his desire for power, or some sort of personality disorder makes him more prone to warlike behavior than is the case with most other political leaders. It is quite another thing to say that this reason alone would have been enough to drive Saddam's decision to start a war with Iran. However, when we examine Saddam's truculent personality traits along side the equally

hostile behavior of Ayatollah Khomeini, i.e. the circumstances which obtained in 1980, we may conclude that the decision to go to war was a indeed a product of the combination of individual personality and the circumstances of the interaction between the two men.

Consequently, our view of Iran should be that Iran is the predominant force which shapes the environment of the Persian Gulf region. The environment within which Saddam Hussein must make his decisions. Unfortunately, Iran's future behavior, at least with respect to Iraq, is difficult to predict. On one hand, Iran continues to export its Islamic Revolution, and many of its foreign policy actions seem inextricably linked to its ideological concerns. On the other hand, many of Iran's foreign policy actions seem pragmatic, as it opens embassies in many developing countries and encourages a return of foreign investors. [2] Their pragmatic approach, however, may be related to their desire to export Islamic revolution, in that Iran seems focused on opening diplomatic relations in developing countries where they can have a hand in influencing the political situation in their favor. While Iran's relationship with Iraq leaves much to be desired, I believe it is very unlikely that any future outbreak of widespread hostilities will be overtly precipitated by Iran. The danger lies in the fact that, even though Iraq was the initial aggressor in 1980, the conditions for war were probably set more by Iran than by Iraq. Consequently, the next war may begin with an Iraqi attack, but it is safe to assume the Iran's foreign policy actions will have driven Saddam Hussein to believe that another war is the best way to maintain his power within Iraq.

Of all the conditions which were present in Iraq in 1980, the one aspect which is virtually unchanged is Saddam Hussein's leadership, and the fact that he continues to remain in power despite repeated attempts to remove him. Although some Western public

figures have been quick to label Saddam as a bungler, who consistently makes serious foreign policy miscalculations. A closer look suggests that Saddam is a patient and calculating individual, who analyzes each situation for its potential costs and benefits. Once he makes a decision, he is absolutely ruthless in carrying out his policies.[3]

Saddam is a survivor. His entire early life revolved around gaining and maintaining power in order to survive the harsh conditions in which he grew up. At the time of Saddam's childhood, the infant mortality rate in rural Iraq averaged 33 percent. Essentially fatherless, Saddam was raised by an abusive stepfather and actually carried an iron bar for protection against other boys, who consistently harassed him. He was known to use this bar to physically beat and dismember stray animals that wandered into his path. Saddam was denied entry into the Iraqi Military Academy, thus thwarting his lifelong desire to obtain an officer's commission. This aspect of his past helps to explain his frequent behavior of appearing in military uniform, wearing the "honorary" rank of general and may also help to explain his apparent predisposition to select military solutions to foreign and internal policy problems.[4]

As he made his way up in the Ba'ath party, Saddam became a proficient assassin and plotter of political intrigue. In 1959, at the age of 22, he participated in the assassination attempt on Iraqi President Qassem, spraying the presidential car with machine gun fire. In 1964, he was responsible for planning and executing the coup d'etat against President Aref, a calculated and ultimately unsuccessful risk which resulted in a two year prison term.[5] Saddam lives by the principle that physical force is a necessary requirement for the attainment and maintenance of power.[6] This view of Saddam makes it easier to believe

that another war with Iran is not only likely, but almost unavoidable, if he remains at the pinnacle of Iraqi political power.

This does not mean, however, that Saddam will strike before he has the capability and wherewithal to assure, at least in his mind, a high probability of success. Several pre-conditions will make his decision to go to war tenable, and by monitoring Saddam's progress toward attaining these conditions, we can hope to assess his intentions and timing.

First, Iraq will continue to consolidate and rebuild its conventional military forces. This will take place through a combination of imported materiel and domestic increases in production. Second, Iraq will continue to evade UN inspectors and further develop its weapons of mass destruction. Third, Saddam, in keeping with his nature, will play by the rules just enough to slowly erode UN resolve, and the sanctions against Iraq will gradually be weakened. Consequently, Iraq will be able to use increased oil revenues to buy or build new military equipment, and the Iraqi people's quality of life will improve enough to prevent wide scale civil unrest.

Assuming that Saddam can accomplish these three goals and rebuild his capability to a point where he perceives that he has significant superiority over Iran, he may hold a future attack as a sort of "trump card" to be played in one or more of the following situations. First, if Iran makes a significant increase in its anti-Ba'thist efforts within Iraq. Second, if Iran attempts to enforce restricted access to the Shatt al Arab waterway or other choke points in the Persian Gulf. Third, if internal conditions of unrest within Iraq convince him that he can successfully employ the use of Iran as a scapegoat to divert the public's attention. With due respect to Geoffrey Blainey's arguments on the "scapegoat theory,"

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Saddam Hussein and his close advisors have been known to use this tactic in the past. It is not outside the realm of possibilities to believe they could do so again. Regardless of the provocation, Saddam Hussein can be counted on to carefully study the environment, and make careful, although perhaps risky, calculations on the use of force. If his cost-benefit analysis leads him to believe he can use force and win, he will undoubtedly execute the decision with brutal determination. The pivotal question revolves around the regional environment which Iran will shape, and how it will be perceived by Saddam. Saddam's fear of Iran and his perception of the balance of power will be key factors in his decision-making cycle. He has chosen war twice since 1980. There is a high probability that he will do so again.

Notes

[1] Waite, R., *Leadership Pathologies: The Kaiser and the Fuhrer and the Decisions for War in 1914 and 1939.* Psychological Dimensions of War
[2] US Department of State, *Notes*
[3] Karsh, E., *Saddam Hussein,*
[4] Ibid.
[5] Ibid., 17.
[6] Ibid., 24

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